

THE TENNESSEAN

3 towns make top 5 for being 'business friendly' Mt. Juliet tops list of 50 Tennessee towns

By Josh Adams • THE TENNESSEAN • November 28, 2010

Three of the state's most business-friendly communities are in Williamson County, according to a study released Monday by the Tennessee Center for Policy Research.

The rankings, revised annually, are compiled according to each city's score in such categories as job growth, crime rates, median per capita income, high school graduation rates and taxes. The policy research center looks at the state's 50 biggest cities, and this year Brentwood, Spring Hill and Franklin round out the top five.

Topping the list for 2010 is Mt. Juliet. Farragut placed second.

"These rankings represent a reflection of certain cities' commitments to creating a business-friendly climate free of stifling taxes and restrictive regulatory burdens," said Justin Owens, president of TCPR, in a prepared statement. "We encourage all Tennessee communities to follow the lead of the cities with the most inviting business environment."

In 2007, TCPR ranked Spring Hill at the top of the list.

The categories in which the cities are ranked are precisely the areas Williamson County strives to excel, according to Matt Largen, director of the county's economic development office. Overall, the property tax rate in any city here is roughly half that of Nashville's, and the public schools are objectively ranked among the best in the state, he said.

Factor in a recent report from the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness that touts Williamson County as providing 39 percent of the new work force in greater Nashville from 2004 to 2009, said Largen, and it makes sense cities here would score well.

Memphis is ranked as the state's least-friendly city for businesses, and like others toward the bottom of the list was penalized heavily for its tax burden. The report also cited crime and low marks in the education categories for Memphis' poor showing.